



**55 Church Street  
New Haven, Connecticut 06457  
203-568-6297**

**Testimony of David Sutherland – Director of Government Relations  
Before the Appropriations Committee –February 17th, 2017**

**In Opposition to the elimination of funding for  
the Council on Environmental Quality,**

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy, I would like to express our opposition to the Governor's proposal to eliminate funding for the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). The CEQ has been a cost-effective and crucial component of the success Connecticut has achieved on the environmental front in the past four decades.

The CEQ, created in 1971, is a nine-member volunteer board that, though housed in the DEEP for administrative purposes, has a small separate staff and budget and works independently of the DEEP.

The council's many statutory responsibilities require funding for at least two staff positions. A loss these positions would eliminate, among other crucial functions:

- investigations of citizen complaints regarding the administration and enforcement of municipal and state environmental laws
- review of Environmental Impact Evaluations of state agency construction projects;
- review of high-impact applications referred by Siting Council;
- review of certain land transfers and other interagency services; and
- publication of the online Environmental Monitor, the official site where all state agencies post notices required by C.G.S. Section 22a-1b(d) - the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act) and C.G.S. Section 4b-47, regarding proposed transfers of state property to once per month.

The need for these functions would not disappear if CEQ's staff is eliminated; it would be imposed upon other state agencies' staff. Our office alone gets many calls regarding citizen complaints and state agency development plans. If we could not refer callers to the CEQ, we would suggest they call DEEP or other agencies, which would be far more difficult bureaucracies for citizens to navigate.

I'll give one of what could be many examples of the role CEQ has played in resolving environmental problems in a constructive, efficient manner. A few years ago, residents of Hartford and the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice approached the CEQ with concerns about the CRRA's South Meadow peaking power plant. Consisting of eight aging jet engines that generate electricity on days of high demand, the plant had been operating for 42 years with no air pollution control or monitoring equipment.

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The CEQ determined that, when operating, the plant emitted more particulate pollution than any other power facility in the state. In December 2011, DEEP published notice of intent to renew the plant's air quality permit with only minor changes. Due to CEQ's subsequent involvement, CRRRA made significant changes to its permit application and a new, much improved permit was issued in August 2012.

As is typical, the CEQ not only helped achieve a constructive resolution to the specific case, but also used it as a case study to recommend changes in overall state policy regarding peaking power plants.

The CEQ provides crucial service, at a minimum cost, to Connecticut's natural resources and residents. Please maintain its current funding.